

Clear S T A G E, and no Favour:

O R,

TRAGEDY *and* COMEDY *at War.*

Occasion'd by the Emulation of the two *Theatric Heroes*,

D A V I D and *G O L I A H*.

Left to the Impartial Decifion of the T O W N.

*When smother'd Rage, or Anguish of the Heart,
The quiv'ring bitten Lip, the sudden Start,
And writhing Limbs shou'd feelingly explain,
So deep it sinks in the Performer's Brain,
Thro' his whole Form such strong Convulsions spread,
Who wou'd not swear him — gilded Gingerbread.*

PHILLIPS.



L O N D O N :

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A

Clear STAGE, and no Favour, &c.



LONG in Suspence the * tattling Gossip stood,
 If *Bayes* were really bad, or *Cato* good ;
 For oft' around the *Theatres* she h'd flown,
 And mark'd each rising Actor as her own :
 But chief in *Booth's*, and *Wilks's* better Days,
 When *Steele* knew justly to condemn or praise,
 The Witlings then were taught to grow polite,
 Not pride themselves upon a riot Night ;
 True Standard Wit, like Gold, wou'd stand the Test ;
 No Poet then the *Templers Clerks* address,
 Nor need a sad and piteous Face put on,
 With " *Dear young Masters save my poor King John !* "
 No cunning Manager who h'd stak'd his All,
 Directed his own Plaudit, or Catcall ;
 Nor did the Theatre Assistance court
 From the Beargarden, Farces to support :

* F A M E.

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Then

Then as in *Rome* she flourish'd and grew great,
 The Friends to *Learning* were so to the *State*,
 Low Pence the Bears and Gladiators stole,
 Content to reign the Lords of *Hockley-Hole*;
 But never durst appear i'th' *comic Scene*,
 Or a d---d Poet on his first *Night Screen*.
 The skilful Town kept ever wide apart,
 The dull Buffoon and Master of his Art,
 Then eccho'd loud the pleasing Trump of Fame,
 To distant Shores each studied Actor's Name.
France droop'd, and *England*, second *Athens* grown,
 Shew'd Twelve good Actor's for the *Frenchman's* One.
 Bad the Succession that to this ensu'd,
 Some few but tolerable, fewer good.
 Most that for Praise prest forward hard and fast,
Fame thought deserv'd not but a single Blast,
 And threw away her Trumpet in a Huff,
 Swearing a *Cutter's Horn* was good enough.

WING, wing away, no Muse we need invoke,
 For *F---l---t---d* ev'ry Muse's Heart hath broke,
 Unstrung the *Lyre*, with *common Sense* made War,
 Ev'n *Handel's* Notes at his Appearance jar,
 Here fix We then; the op'ning Scene survey;
Fame shall to Night be Mistress of the Play,

So seated, that at ev'ry tranfient View,
 She from One Stage can fee the other Two ;
 But quits enfeebling Strains and lulling Notes,
 For thefe ſhe bids *ſoft Nothings* ſtretch their Throats.
 Which foppish *P---r D---ct---s* ſhall devour,
 Fainting away at ev'ry loud *Encore*.
 To them ſhe turns her back :-----*Fame's* never fold,
 They ſeek not her, content with dirty Gold :
 Theſe be my Sons, ſays ſhe, who ſtarve and toil,
 Like *Flies* who buzz round *Beaſts* that *ſhare the Spoil*,
 And hang on them; (the common Fate of Wit)
 Provided now and then they taſte a Bit.
 Here ſit we down, if no Offence to *Jones*,
 And the Churchwardens, on theſe holy Stones,
 Where late the tott'ring Pillars of the State,
 F---lſe J---ft---es in falſe Election fate :
 A Place which at the firſt might ſeem uncouth,
 But that it ſince was purified with Truth.
 Here view the *Theatres* juſt as they ſtand,
 And ſhift the Scene as Fancy ſhall command.
 For know two Heroes, foremoſt in my Liſt,
 To Night on the contended Prize inſiſt ;
 “ And *Richard* vows that t'other *Richard* ſhall
 “ Meet, and ne'er part 'till one of them ſhall fall.”
 But leave we theſe awhile in Peace and Reſt,
 'Till *they* at *D---cks* determine which is beſt.

Some of the lower Class divert us first,
 All grand Proceffions open with the worst.
 In C—r—n—t—on Faces, odly cast,
 The greatest Actor always walks the last.
 Mark one who tragical struts up and down,
 And rolls the Words as *Sisyphus* his Stone:
 His lab'ring Arms, unequal to the Weight,
 Heave like a Porter's when at *Billingsgate*.
 But who is he that mincing trips along,
 Making *Lee's* Fury a mere Op'ra Song?
 But hark!—" To rack the Soul, to rend the Ear,
 " To fill the deaf'ning Audience with Fear,
 " Note under Note in tuneless Discord join
 " That deadly Anger-rending Task be mine!
 " For as friend *Aaron's* Counsel wisely ends,
My swift-shot Soul at ev'ry Start ascends.
 Two chattering Daws, next in some Scene break loose,
 And make a perfect Rook'ry of the House,
 Pass these to where in solemn Pomp and State,
 One heavily drags on a Robe of State,
 Loft in the Diadem he seems to wear,
 He mouths away, and the Spectators stare,
 While *this* makes ev'n the *freest* Speeches grave,
That makes 'em dance like *Corks* upon a *Wave*.
 This *Lover* whose complaining Terms shou'd melt
 The Heart, to Softness which he never felt.

His Stupid Looks the Lady never own,
 But brandish'd Truncheon seems to knock her down.
 The Stage we own may justly Morals teach;
 But shou'd an Actor therefore always *preach*?
H---lex, 'tis said, that Wonder of Mankind!
 His Action from the great *Macheath's* refin'd.
 All Eloquence and Wit were his before,
 The Stage then taught him *Bronze*,---Fate cou'd no more.
 But hold, the *comic Scene* crowds on apace---
 Now enter grinning, Fripling, Fopp'ry and Grimace,
 How much falls ev'ry massacred poor Part
 Beneath a *Johnson's* Justness, *Griffin's* Art?
 Lamented *Johnson* mellow'd down by Years,
 Left *humour'd Nature* for his Loss in Tears;
 As knowing well with frothy senseless Jokes,
 The Tribe to come wou'd spoil her strongest Strokes.
 While *Griffin* liv'd the *British* Stage cou'd boast,
 What *France* long since in her *Moliere* had lost.
 Now Humour seems to fly the dull Male Train,
 With double Force in Female Form to reign.
 Mark *her* whose Judgment each returning Night
 In varied Shapes gives Pleasure and Delight
 From the high *Palace* to the lowly *Cot*
 Equally Just in Action, Word and Thought,
 In ev'ry Scene, in ev'ry Look so strong,
 We shou'd *ourselves*, by not *applauding*, wrong.

Now turn we where discarded *Nature* turn'd adrift,
 They Comedy to low Buffoon'ry shift,
 Could *Laureat Ben* but from the Grave arise,
 And see his Manly Scenes in their *Disguise*,
 He'd curse the Time he spent with so much Toil
 To raise a Fabric but for them to spoil:
 Yet mark the Vanity each of them shares,
 The *tragic Actor* ne'er the *comic* spares,
 One cries *you murder'd Congreve* to other Night,
 Ay, *you made Shakespear* in a horrid Plight,
 Says one; and *you made honest merry Steele*
 The dire Effects of your bad acting feel.
 At the same Time; replies a witty Third,
 When were a Bill against them all prefer'd,
 By any honest Jury 'twould be found,
 They *each* of them had murder'd *all* around.

BUT hush! sit still,--- the Principals appear;
 Who's he that presses forward from the Rear,
 Like some young *Champion's Squire* in old Romance,
 But that he Pen and Paper holds for Shield and Lance?
 Know'st thou not him? says Fame, who takes such Pains
 To be observ'd by Head, Hand, Heel, and Brains,
 In ev'ry Mob, in ev'ry Riot he,
 If not the first, will yet the second be.

Whether *Elections* claim his ready Hand,
Or a new Play his Presence shall command ;
Whether he lays down Rules to *B----n's* Wits,
Or if at *Sm----d's* dictating he sits ;
In all Disputes he bears an equal Part,
Wou'd once be *Mannerly*, and always *Smart*.
Stunn'd with the Noise of some Prize-fighters Drums,
From penning Challenges, red-hot he comes :
The wild Delirium reigns so in his Brain,
He *puffs* his *Th—re* in the same Strain :
Strange! that a *Bard*, who hath so fiercely finote
P—rs, P—ces, Blockheads, whenfoe'er he wrote,
Shou'd e'er deprive poor *P—ps* of his Gains,
And tune to *chink of Pence* his *Venal Strains* :
A Challenge now he brings most ably penn'd,
Wherein he satirizes most his Friend,
And humbly moves that for his better Sport,
The Heroes both may mount at *To——m C—rt* :
For in low Stile he owns himself well vers'd,
And d—ns the Players, as he *Mafons* curst ;
Or rather Worse, for he, by Guile, ensnares,
And hurts them most, when Friendship he declares.
Such low Petitions we can never grant,
Let him write better if he Contest want ;
Howe'er tho' dead to *Fame*, it sha'n't be lost,
They may record it in the *Daily Post*.

THE '*Squire o'th' Pen* thus sent in Haste away,
The *little Richard* foremost comes in Play,

And with a pleasing Mien address'd fair *Fame*,
To waft around the World his rising Name :
Fair Nymph, says he, whose Voice all Men adore
The Great, the Low, the Wise, Fool, Rich or Poor,
On diff'rent Stages I have fought thy Aid,
Strove for thee in each labour'd Part I've plaid,
Whether as sterner *Richard*, 'gainst my Will,
I've shewn the *Villain* consummate in Ill ;
Or if much better suited to my Heart,
You've seen me act the honest Brother's Part ;
Or if in aged *Lear* I aim'd to move
Your Grief, or in young *Clody* gain your Love.
For These, for many more which I cou'd name,
Grant me the long-sought Praise I justly claim :
But if thy Trumpet is not to be blown,
Here's honest *P-----* I shall puff me to it soon.
Consider, Fair One, I can write and act,
Let one Pretence by t'other then be backt.
Your softer Notes the Player may reward,
Then take your t'other Trumpet for the Bard.
Consider well the Progress I have made,
And in one Year on sev'ral Stages play'd :
First taught dull *G--dm--*'s *F--ds* to grow polite,
Then burnish'd *brazen Ireland* to look bright :
And last in height of my theatric Fury,
Espous'd the sinking Cause of failing *Drury*,
And like the mad *Drawcanfir* of my *Bayes*,
Claim the first Part in all their shining Plays.

Shall *Covent-Garden* then with me contend ?
In Chaos sooner shall all Stages end,
Their Gods desert them, and their Tumblers fall,
Machines, Traps, Flights, and Cloudings tumble all.
Give it me all, no doubtful Prize I'll share,
Refuse me then the Triumph----- if you dare.
Were *Shakespear* to determine, he wou'd say,
I only cou'd his Fav'rite *Richard* play.
He spake and strutted round the Stage secure,
His Rival wou'd not the Dispute endure.
When with stern Air and steady awful Brow,
Q--- to the Conflict came well fixt, but slow.
Deep in the Mind sunk ev'ry Word he spake,
And no crackt Accents the firm Period break ;
Resolv'd as *Cato*, when in *Rome's* great Cause,
He vows to rise or perish with her *Laws* ;
And shall I, *Fame* ! he cried, dispute with One,
But lately heeded, and but lately known,
Tho' he on diff'rent Stages since hath shone.
Mine long is fixt, and shou'd a thousand rise
From me, they cannot tear my lawful Prize.
What tho' *Hibernia's Theatre* he throng'd,
Must my establish'd Right be therefore wrong'd ?
Often unfair are his Pursuits for *Fame*,
He courts the lowest Means to spread his Name,
'Cause *there* he pleas'd, must *Puffs* his Way precede,
That *England* may his foreign Actions read.

Like *Prussian* Couriers from *Silesia* sent,
Twelve sounding Horns before the Bearer went,
Tho' all were then quite doubtful of th' Event.

WHY boasts he *Richard*? let our Skill be known
Not by mean Flatt'ers, but th' impartial Town.
But let Him not my *Cato* still forget,
"And *Falstaff* is inimitable yet."
I seek not *Fame* by airy Puff or Blast,
Fame I have, give me the Fame will last.

STRAIT blew the Trumpet, and the Echo round
Return'd us this decisive sudden Sound.
Merit we give ye both; but know, young Man,
We never Merit by Ambition scan.
As he is fixt, there's room enough to rise,
The best you can expect's to share the Prize.
But if to eager Conflict push'd by Pride
You run, We thus impartially decide;
Some two Years hence, when the first Gout is o'er,
Many will hate what now they most adore.
If then the same Esteem as now You hold,
We'll order both to be anew enroll'd.
In the mean Time, urge ev'ry Art to please,
The Stage is Clear, each happy Moment seize.

F I N I S